

II. Rejections Based on 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 51-59, 74-83, 100-101, 112-118, 120, 123-125, 135-141, 143-150, 152-159 and 161-168 stand rejected as being anticipated by Fujikawa et al, U.S. 5,520,744.

Claims 51-59, 74-83, 100-101, 135-141, and 143-150

Claim 51 includes the steps of, “performing a quick dump to discharge the process fluid from the vessel, leaving residual process fluid on the surface of the object,” and “after discharging the process fluid from the vessel, introducing a drying vapor into the system.” Claims 52-59 are dependent on Claim 51 and also include these steps.

Claim 74 includes the steps of “performing a quick dump to discharge the rinse fluid from the vessel, leaving residual rinse fluid on the surface of the object,” and “after discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel.” Claims 75 – 83 are dependent on Claim 74.

Claim 100 includes the steps of “discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel, leaving residual rinse fluid on the surface of the object,” and “after discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel.” Claim 101 is dependent on Claim 100.

Claim 135 recites the steps of “discharging the process fluid from the vessel” and “after discharging the process fluid from the vessel to expose the surface, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel.” Claims 136-141 are dependent on Claim 135.

Claim 143 recites the steps of “discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel” and “after discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel to expose the surface, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel.” Claims 144-150 are dependent on Claim 143.

Claims 51-59, 74-83, 100-101, 135-141, and 143-150 are not anticipated by Fujikawa et al, since the Fujikawa reference lacks any teaching of introducing a drying vapor into the vessel after discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel.

Claims 112-118, 120, and 123-125

Claim 112 includes the steps of “discharging the treatment solution from the vessel,” and “after the treatment solution has been fully discharged from the vessel and without first rinsing the semiconductor substrate, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel.” Claims 113 – 118 are dependent on Claim 112.

Claim 120 recites the steps of: "discharging the treatment solution from the vessel;" and "after the treatment solution has been fully discharged from the vessel and without first rinsing the object, introducing a drying vapor into the vessel." Claims 123-125 are dependent on Claim 120.

Claims 112-118, 120, and 123-125 are not anticipated by Fujikawa et al, since the Fujikawa reference lacks any teaching of introducing a drying vapor into the vessel after discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel.

Claims 152-159 and 161-168

Claim 152 recites the steps of "discharging the process fluid from the vessel so as to drop the liquid level of the process fluid to an elevation beneath the elevation of the surface" and "after discharging the process fluid . . . introducing a drying vapor into the vessel." Claims 153-159 are dependent on Claim 152.

Claim 161 recites the steps of "discharging the rinse fluid from the vessel so as to drop the liquid level of the rinse fluid to an elevation beneath the elevation of the surface" and "after discharging the rinse fluid . . . introducing a drying vapor into the vessel." Claims 162-168 are dependent on Claim 161.

Claims 152-159 and 161-168 are not anticipated by Fujikawa et al. The cited reference fails to teach the recited steps of "discharging the process fluid from the vessel so as to drop the liquid level of the process fluid to an elevation beneath the elevation of the surface" and "after discharging the process fluid . . . introducing a drying vapor into the vessel."

In view of the forgoing, it is respectfully submitted that all claims are allowable over the cited referenced. Early reconsideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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